Adulteration of Food Stuff

76. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether food adulteration is going on in large scale with impunity throughout the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the adulterants being used cause severe illness in human beings;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether it is a fact that there is woeful lack of staff, laboratory, equipment and other infrastructure to prevent food adulteration and long drawn legal process and gentle punishment, if at all convicted, are emboldening the habitual food adulterators; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and the measures contemplated to strengthen the drive against food adulteration and make the punishment for offenders swift and severe, including death-penalty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (d) The implementation of the PFA Act, 1954 and Rules, 1955 is entrusted to the Food (Health) Authorities of the States/UTs. The enforcement staff of the Food (Health) Authorities draw random samples of different food articles from all sources *viz.* Manufacturers, Wholesalers and Retailers and get them analysed so as to see whether the samples conform to the standards laid down under PFA Rules, 1955 and other provisions of the PFA Act.

As per the information made available by Food (Health) Authorities through their Annual Reports on the working of the PFA Act and Rules in their respective State/U.T, the average percentage of adulteration in different food articles is approximately 10.43% from 2001 to 2005.

The adulterants used in food articles may or may not cause illness in human beings.

(e) and (f) Since implementation of PFA Act rests with the Food (Health) Authority of the States/U.Ts, no specific report on shortage of staff, laboratories equipment or other infrastructure has been brought to the notice of this Ministry. However, the capacity enforcement staff and food laboratories of various States/U.Ts are being further strengthened under World Bank Capacity Building Project.

The Food (Health) Authorities are advised from time to time to draw more samples of food articles which are suspected to be adulterated and to take strict action against the adulterators under the provisions of the said Act.

As far as punishment is concerned, the Act stipulates imprisonment terms from six months up to life depending upon the gravity of offence.